

Section M
Aesthetics

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C-065447

AESTHETICS

Setting

Aesthetics refers to the visual effects of a landscape that are either pleasing or displeasing to a viewer. Different viewers could have substantially different opinions about a landscape. Any assessment of aesthetic qualities is, therefore, subjective by nature. The following assessment is based on a field survey conducted in December 1987.

Regional Views

The predominant visual character of the area surrounding the project site is urban development to the north, east, and south; and agricultural lands to the west and southwest. A marina is located where Ten Mile Slough meets the San Joaquin River to the southwest.

Onsite Views

The project site, bisected into northern and southern sections by Brookside Road, is characterized by open agricultural land (Figure M-1). Although currently vacant, crops such as sugar beets, corn, wheat, alfalfa, and irrigated pasture are grown seasonally on the site. Structures present on the site include scattered residential dwellings and PGandE transmission lines running east-west through the middle of the site.

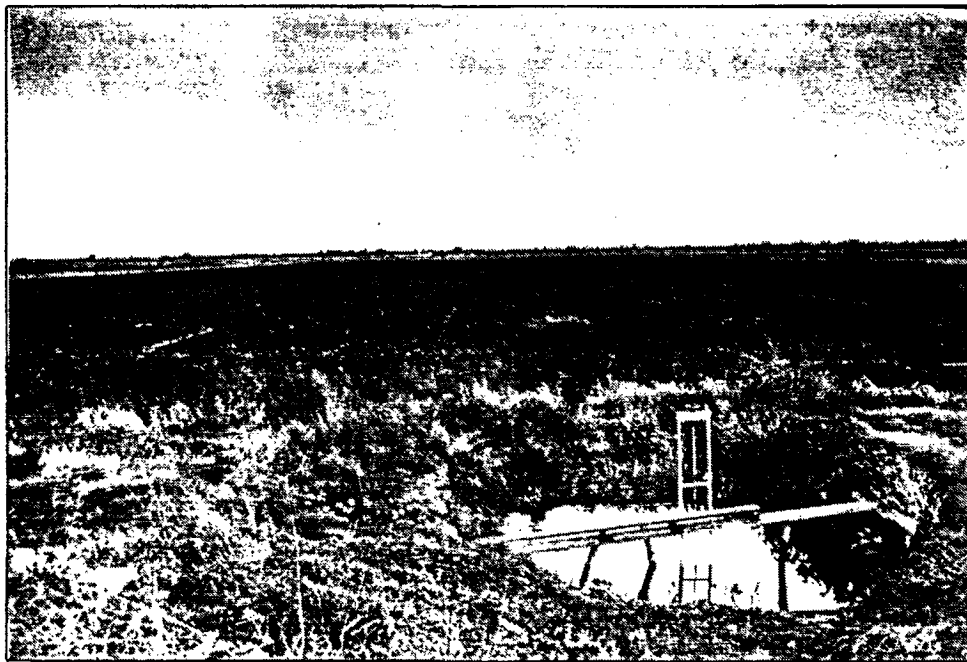
Levees on all sides prevent onsite views of Fourteen Mile Slough to the north, the Calaveras River and the Stockton Deep Water Channel to the south, and Ten Mile Slough to the west. Residential development is visible to the east. The sloughs support a variety of riparian vegetation and trees, some of which is visible above the levees (see Section E, "Vegetation, Wildlife, and Aquatic Resources").

Offsite Views

Views accessible to the public are mainly from Brookside Road, which bisects the southern portion of the site, and from the surrounding levee roads. Brookside Road provides an open space, "urban relief" view to



View of Southern Portion of Property from
Brookside Road Looking Southwest



View of Northern Portion of Property from Ten Mile
Levee Road Looking East

FIGURE M-1. VIEWS OF THE PROJECT AREA

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motorists traveling away from urban developments. This view is enhanced by the visibility of the Coast Ranges and Mt. Diablo in the distance.

Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Implementation of the project would transform the open agricultural land to urban land uses consisting of both residential and commercial development. Aesthetically, the effect would be to extend the limit of urbanization westward. The significance of any impacts associated with this transformation depends, however, upon a particular viewer's perception of the change.

Onsite Impacts

Impact: Conflicts Between Commercial and Residential Uses

The design of the development places commercial uses adjacent to residential uses (see "Project Description"). This could be a significant impact to the aesthetic quality of the surrounding residences, depending on the commercial uses selected. Possible impacts could be light and glare from commercial lighting, and visual contrast of the two uses. The Land Use Element of the General Plan 2000 (City of Stockton 1978) provides that "where commercial uses are located in a residential neighborhood, residential uses shall be buffered from commercial uses." This impact could be reduced to a less-than-significant level by implementing the following measures.

Mitigation Measures

- o Incorporate berms or vegetation buffers between commercial and residential uses.
- o Plant a fast-growing, high-low landscape screen, which incorporates alternating heights of plants.
- o Use lighting shields to direct commercial light away from residences.

Offsite Impacts

Impact: Change in Viewshed from Rural/Agricultural to Urban

The Environmental Resources Management Element (ERME) (City of Stockton 1980) states that "the City of Stockton is surrounded by open space that serves not only an economic but also a psychological function. It frames and separates the urban form, providing a valuable greenbelt that acts as a major scenic resource." Development of the proposed project would transform the site character from rural open space to a suburban atmosphere. This change would be most apparent to motorists traveling on the proposed March Lane extension and Brookside Road realignment. The development would also be seen by motorists and pedestrians from the

surrounding levees. The visual impact of the buildings and the extensive road system of the proposed project would be partially mitigated by the 248-acre golf course (with landscaping, trees and water features), 48-acre lake, and 15.2-acre park. These amenities would reduce the severity of the change in views to the site.

Because aesthetic considerations are subjective in nature, it is difficult to assign significance to visual impacts. It is clear that a substantial change in the appearance of the site would take place, but this change would significantly effect only motorists, pedestrians, or bicyclists traveling on Brookside Road and March Lane, and occasionally, motorists on the levees. Views from north, south, and east of the site in existing urban areas would not be adversely affected since the levees surrounding the property block most of these views. Thus, although the proposed project would substantially change the visual character of the site, this impact is considered less than significant. To further reduce this impact and add to the open space character of the site, the following measure could be implemented.

Mitigation Measure

- o Line March Lane with trees to add open space character to the site.

Impact: Aesthetics Altered for People Using The Marina and Fishing in Buckley Cove

Implementation of the project could possibly impact the riverine experience of those who use the Buckley Cove Marina and fish in the upper portion of Buckley Cove. The natural riverine views in these areas would be changed to one of residential and commercial development and would be particularly affected by the R-1 units proposed for the east side of the Buckley Cove Marina (Figure 3). The change in views from the marina would be substantial, but this impact is considered less than significant because only a relatively small number of people are expected to be adversely affected.

Mitigation Measures

- o None is available.

Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Impact: Loss of Open Space Buffer Areas

The City of Stockton General Plan 2000 provides recommendations for preserving open space agricultural land as an aesthetic buffer to separate and frame urban areas. This project, as well as other proposed development projects, would cumulatively decrease the amount of openspace land available to buffer urban and rural communities, such as north Stockton, Morada, and

Lodi. This impact is considered to be significant and cannot be mitigated to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measures

- o None is available.

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